

C Company at Dachau



Dan P. Dougherty



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Photo Credits: Photos of the platoon, Dan, Wilkin, Abraham, Steiner, Ewing, Parker, and Army Duck by Dan • Sutton, Deszöfe, and Rodda photos by Paul Rodda • Dachau boxcar and naked corpses by Edwin F. Gorak (deceased) • SS corpses by Fred Abraham (deceased) • Dachau hospital banner by Killingbeck (deceased) • GIs riding tank by unknown. Others by either Army Signal Corps or 45th Division photographers

Part One

GETTING THERE

On 15Apr45 in the closing days of World War II in Europe, 7th Army troops (the 3rd, 42nd, and 45th Infantry Divisions) had Nuremberg surrounded and if anyone but Hitler had been in charge, the city would have been surrendered. It was defended and so the first day we (C Company [Co], 157th Regiment, 45th Division) sat on the bluffs and watched planes of the Army Air Force repeatedly dive bomb the city with no opposition. Four days later the three divisions converged in the center of Nuremberg and that night C Co hiked back to the suburbs to find a standing building in which we could sleep.

Big problem for infantry troops in Nuremberg was snipers and one victim was Cpl. Edwin G. Wilkin of our platoon who was killed-in-action. He posthumously received the Medal of Honor for his actions earlier in the Siegfried

Line. In 1948 when Wilkin's remains were returned to his home town of Longmeadow, Massachusetts, his mother called to invite me to attend the Memorial Day service but I

was in the middle of college finals in Minnesota and couldn't go. Army Chief of Staff General Omar N. Bradley spoke and John Scherer and James Crane represented our platoon as honorary pallbearers. (I took this photo of Wilkin on about 11Apr45, just a week before he was killed. See also Wilkin, Scherer, and Crane in the 2nd Platoon photo taken the same day, which is shown on page 3.)

The 45th and 42nd Divisions left Nuremberg on April 22 heading for Munich with the goal of getting there as soon as possible so as to deny Germans time to organize a defense as they had at Nuremberg. The German military effort was collapsing and we often rode tanks or tank destroyers just to keep up. Privates Virgil S. Kay #37750798 and Joseph Marshall #42117361 were two of twelve replacements who joined C Co on April 20 and they were both wounded on the 25th. Kay died in the hospital on May 6. He served just five days in C Co and was our last fatality of the war.

We arrived at the Danube on the morning of the 26th. The bridges in our area were blown and while we waited for Ducks (DUKW was the Army's designation) to take us

Rubble in Nuremberg



Corporal Wilkin on 11Apr45



across, I wrote to my parents: "Well, here I am humming the Blue Danube Waltz while looking at the Danube River. Not suppose to tell you where I am but our lieutenant never reads the mail so I'm not limited much." One duty of platoon leaders was to censor the outgoing mail but by that time it was obvious the war was ending and our lieutenant had me, the platoon guide, signing off for him on the envelopes.

Better than walking!



While crossing the river that morning, the engine conked out in the Duck in which my group was riding and we quite literally became a sitting duck as we floated deeper into possibly hostile territory on the swiftly flowing Danube. The engineer eventually restarted the engine and got us across, but we had traveled quite a ways downstream and felt lucky not to have been shot at. There were about seven or eight of us GIs and we didn't locate the 45th Division until the afternoon of the next day. I never felt good about the fact that, hungry and without food, we stole K-rations from another division that day.

By April 28 we were nearing Munich and that night we slept in some woods, which by itself was unusual because by that time we were almost insisting on sleeping in homes. When we assembled in the morning to get our rations, our

commanding officer 1st Lt. Bert V. Edmunds #0-1050467 said, "Gather around, guys. I have to give you special orders." Nothing like that had ever happened and I remember his telling us the division was in the vicinity of a concentration camp and it was important that witnesses be kept alive. This meant nothing to us. We didn't know what a concentration

camp was, and besides, C Co was in reserve that day. We had an easy stop-and-go morning but about one o'clock our company runner came to our platoon and I was standing by him when he told us, "We're going into a concentration camp to relieve I Co because I Co's gone berserk!" So, we had to hike over to the 3rd Battalion sector. My recollection is that we arrived at the Dachau Concentration Camp between 3 and 4 p.m. but others remember it as earlier. We didn't know the name of the place and even if we'd been told, it would not have meant anything. None of us had ever heard of Dachau.

WW II "Duck," 45th Div. Museum



C Co's 2nd Platoon on 11Apr45

This photo of most of the members of the 2nd Platoon of C Company (Co), 157th Regiment, 45th Division was taken about 11Apr45 by S/Sgt Dan P. Dougherty (Army Serial Number #17144035) in the German village of Eibstad during a break (April 9–12) following the Aschaffenburg battle (30Mar–04Apr). Dan had been wounded in the Siegfried Line (18Mar45) and returned from the hospital April 2. At the time, he was serving as Squad Leader and he was appointed platoon guide after Wilkin was killed on the 18th. Dan's camera was carried by the C Co kitchen crew and he had access to it only twice during the war.



- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Pvt Michael Kacarab Jr. #35841164 was a member of the 3rd Platoon. | 9 Pfc William Safron #31333515, Medic. | 17 Pvt George N. Tyson Jr. #33939401 left on April 24 because of illness. |
| 2 S/Sgt Robert Schimp #33682426 was appointed Squad Leader after his actions in the Siegfried Line for which he received the Silver Star. | 10 S/Sgt Chester J. Stevens #33028105, squad leader, left April 16 with a non-military injury. | 18 Pvt Myron Treder #37598976. |
| 3 Pfc Raymond T. Harbour #34980196. | 11 Pfc Ralph D. Ivins #39148952. | 19 Cpl Edwin G. Wilkin #31416626 was appointed platoon guide after his actions in the Siegfried Line and posthumously received the Medal of Honor. "Wilkie" was killed in Nuremberg on April 18 before his promotion to S/Sgt came through. |
| 4 T/5 James V. Crane #35165767 was wounded April 21. | 12 Pfc John F. Scherer #33835819. | 20 1st Lt. Eugene E. "Buck" Henneman #0-304445, our former platoon leader, was visiting that day from 1st Battalion Headquarters Co. |
| 5 Pfc Leonard A. Newhouse #3499076. | 13 Pfc James E. Killingbeck, #39477665. | |
| 6 Pvt Bruno Perino #36778677. | 14 Pfc Clifford Hill #33935139. | |
| 7 Pfc Velmer G. Stevens #36414258, Medic. | 15 T/Sgt Benjamin E. Ewing Jr. #34781918 was the only sergeant in the platoon not wounded in the Siegfried Line and was appointed platoon sergeant. | |
| 8 2nd Lt. James S. Penny Jr. 0-1332526 joined C Co 02Apr45 as platoon leader, replacing Henneman. | 16 Pvt George A. Thomann #35844810. | |

Note: All C Co members named in this article served as a Rifleman unless otherwise indicated.

Part Two

DACHAU

On Sunday, 29Apr45, we approached the Dachau Concentration Camp on a road from the southwest and up ahead we saw boxcars and gondola cars on the railroad track that paralleled the road on our left. When we reached the cars, the doors were open and we made the horrifying discovery that they contained the most emaciated corpses imaginable. The bodies were nothing but skin and bones, still mostly in the remnants of their striped uniforms. There's no way to prepare for such an experience. We would stare and then walk to the next car and stare some more. The eyes on some of the bodies were open and they stared right back at us. No one had anything profound to say, just an occasional "My God!" Turned out there were thirty-nine cars with 2,310 corpses. That's an average of almost sixty bodies per car!

At the time, of course, we knew nothing about the origins of the train or what had happened, but we now know the whole story and that train belonged as much to the history of Buchenwald as Dachau. In brief, the train had left Buchenwald on April 7 with 4,500 prisoners jammed into fifty-five cars headed for Flossenburg (a large slave labor camp where the noted pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the head of German military intelligence, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, were executed on April 9), but during the trip, the train was rerouted to Dachau where, after a three-week journey, it arrived on the 28th, the day before we arrived. It is now referred to as the Buchenwald-Dachau Death Train. The Dachau commandant's journal for April 28 listed 816 survivors. They must have crawled out of the boxcars.

Once inside the camp, our platoon leader James Penny said, "Okay, guys, fan out and look for guards." Some went right, some straight ahead, and I went to the left with Jim

Boxcars with corpses of prisoners



SS corpses in the Dachau coal yard



Pvt Fred Abraham #42074553 was a C Co runner and interpreter for CO Bert Edmunds. Fred was born and raised in Fulda, Germany. "I had complete mastery of the German language and I was able to read and translate the German (Soldbuck) paybooks which were written in the Gothic script and listed all units they had belonged to then and in the past." Edmunds gave Fred a camera at Dachau and told him to take pictures.

Killingbeck and others. We soon came to another amazing sight – about a dozen reporters in civilian clothes milling around SS corpses in what turned out to be the camp coal yard.

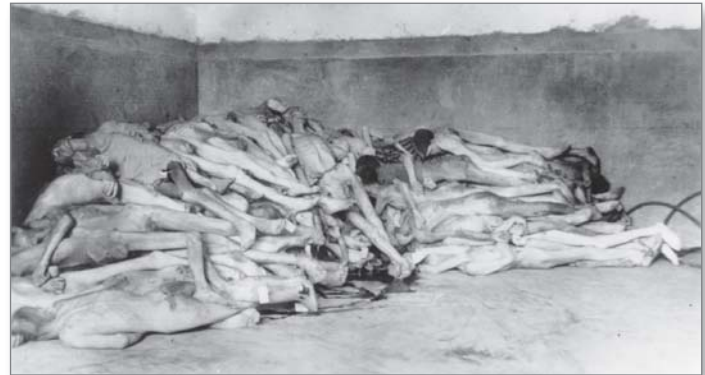
In anticipation of the liberation, the Army had assembled this media group behind the lines and had brought them in even before all the guards had been rounded up. While we were there, a corporal in our group crawled over the corpses and cut off a finger from one. He wanted an SS ring for a souvenir! “Hey, you can’t do that,” a reporter yelled, but the deed was done. Later, there was an investigation of the shooting of the Dachau guards and an excerpt from the report on the coal yard reads “I found seventeen bodies . . . a finger had been completely severed from one body; from another body a finger had been severed at the second joint.” Maybe our corporal got two rings!

(Note: Concentration camps were run and staffed by SS troops. SS was short for Schutzstaffel, which translates as protection squad. It was originally formed in the 1920s to protect Hitler at Nazi rallies, but after Heinrich Himmler was appointed Reichsfuhrer SS in 1929, the goals and functions were constantly expanded to the point the SS became one of the most evil and efficient killing machines the world has ever known.

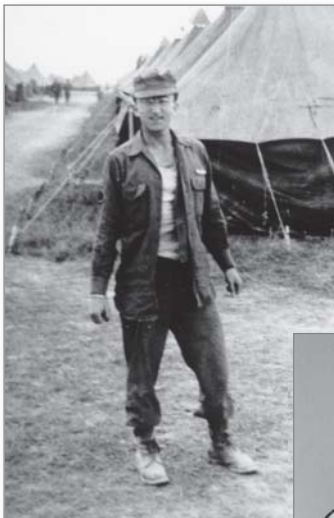
Somber trio at Dachau



Naked corpses of prisoners



S/Sgt Leonard Parker



Architect
Leonard Parker



Concentration camp guards were originally organized as SS-Death’s Head units, and we had fought against Waffen-SS infantry troops in France and Germany.)

Leonard Parker, a squad leader in our 3rd Platoon, wrote to his family: “We came upon the camp enclosure and out of the gate came three prisoners . . . The first one yelled at me, ‘Boy are we glad to see you,’ and you could have knocked me over with a feather because I hadn’t expected anyone to yell at me in English. He was a U.S. Army officer who had parachuted into France three months before D-day on a secret mission and had been captured by the Gestapo and sent to Dachau.” (This was Lt. Rene J. Guiraud, a member of the Office of Strategic Services who had been arrested as a spy and who was one of six Americans liberated at Dachau.)

Leonard continued: “I guess the rest of the prisoners were waiting to see if we were all right because then came a flood of human skeletons . . . They fell on the ground at our feet and kissed our boots and grabbed for our hands and kissed them.” Later, “A Jewish prisoner came up to me and asked me if it

were true that there were Jewish soldiers in the American Army. When I told him I was a Jewish ‘unterofficier,’ he nearly went mad. Soon I had about fifty Jewish men and women

around me hugging and kissing me.” (After the war, Leonard was one of C Co’s most distinguished alums. He finished his education at the University of Minnesota and M.I.T. and was an important architect in Minneapolis. The Leonard Parker Associates designed buildings all over the world, and Leonard was professor emeritus at the university. He died in 2011. Note: He was S/Sgt Leonard S. Popuch #36809920 in C Co but after the war he changed his name.)

I spent the rest of our daylight hours at Dachau maintaining a post on the west side of this huge camp and during that time I saw our men take only two guards to the rear. One building just over the wall from the coal yard had a large red cross painted on its roof. This was the hospital for the SS troops and when I walked through it, there were no patients or medical personnel present. (See the Nazi flag Killingbeck found in the hospital.) I never did see the confinement area where the prisoners were held, the crematorium, or the mounds of naked corpses, which the soldiers found more horrifying than the boxcars.

Nazi flag Killingbeck found in the Dachau SS hospital



John M. Steiner Ph.D.



Steiner’s
Auschwitz
number



Altogether at Dachau, 31,432 prisoners were liberated alive in various stages of ill health and thousands of emaciated corpses were found. The next day the Army conscripted adults in the town of Dachau, trucked them to the camp, and made them handle the bodies. The largest group of survivors was 9,082 Polish prisoners, including ninety-six women and 830 Catholic priests. Many prisoners were so far gone they didn’t last long. Lt. Marcus J. Smith, the Army doctor in charge of post-liberation Dachau, reported that, after May 5, more than 3,000 bodies were cremated or buried.

In the 1990s I developed a warm friendship with Professor John M. Steiner at Sonoma State University. As a teenage prisoner from Prague, he had survived Theresienstadt, Auschwitz (where he lost his mother), and Dachau and after the war he became a

renowned Holocaust scholar. His Auschwitz number 168904 was tattooed on his left arm and he had worn his Dachau number 142095 on his uniform. After terrible experiences in various locations where he lost several toes, John had arrived at Dachau in a boxcar in January 1945 and, speaking for the few survivors, told the SS to “Either give us food or shoot us” and they received some rations. He spent his four months at Dachau in the infirmary where more toes were amputated without anesthesia by fellow Czech prisoner Dr. Franz Blaha, who later testified at the Nuremberg Trials. (John told me he is the nineteen-year-old prisoner (who spoke Czech, German, and English) in the photo of the Dachau crematorium with Major General Robert T. Frederick, commanding officer of the 45th Division. John died in 2014.)

Frederick and Steiner at Dachau crematorium



In the course of rounding up several hundred guards, some of the 45th and 42nd Division troops – officers and GIs alike – had a breakdown in discipline that day in different unrelated incidents but there was a lot of provocation. I've never seen evidence that more than about thirty guards were killed without benefit of a trial. There was an investigation of the killing of the guards but no charges were ever filed. There's a strong presumption the report was quashed by General George Patton when commanding the Army of Occupation of Bavaria after the war. At a different time in a different war, there might have been a prosecution but at the conclusion of World War II in Europe, during which the evils of the Nazi tyranny had been laid bare, there was no interest in pursuing the matter. (For more of the story of the Dachau liberation with many photos, read *The Liberator* by Alex Kershaw.)

T/Sgt Ben Ewing

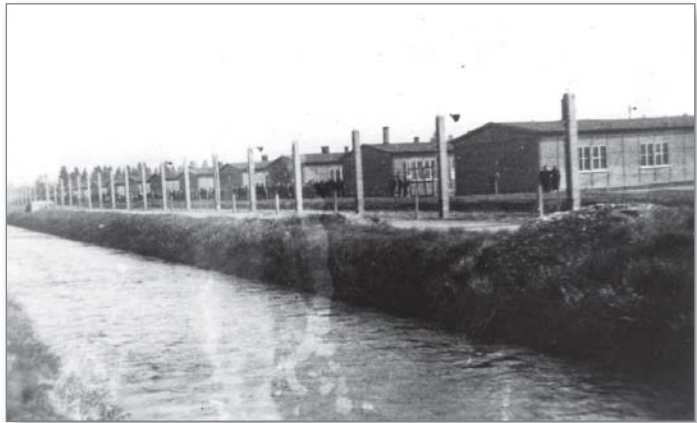


back with the 1st Battalion and we were out of there before dawn the next day to resume the attack on Munich.

Prisoner helps C Co GIs remove SS corpse from moat



Dachau barracks with electrified fence and moat on the west side of the confinement area



For decades I wondered why we never did guard duty that night at Dachau. I eventually learned that in the evening we who had relieved I Co in the afternoon were, in turn, relieved by them, and it seems the other platoons of C Co had hiked back to the town of Dachau and slept in homes. My platoon slept in the camp in a single-family home that had housed a senior SS officer's family. Outside were flowerbeds and inside were upholstered furniture and framed pictures on the walls. Most of us were about nineteen years of age and knew we'd had a mind-boggling experience. We couldn't get over the contrast between our quarters and the total depravity outside and we talked until midnight. Platoon sergeant Ben Ewing remembered going upstairs in the home and finding a children's nursery with toys on the floor and a crucifix on the wall. It was a tough day. Before entering the camp, we had been cautioned only about lice.

That night I learned from the other guys that there was much of the camp I hadn't seen and I was determined to have a look around in the morning but the opportunity never came. They wanted C Co

Part Three

DACHAU SATELLITE CAMP AT ALLACH

We left the Dachau Concentration Camp before dawn on Monday, 30Apr45, heading for Munich and were hiking briskly when, later that morning, we came to a tall picket fence. This turned out to be the perimeter of the Dachau satellite camp at Allach where the guards had fled. (Allach was seven miles from Dachau and was the largest of ninety-four subcamps located throughout Bavaria down into Austria. Other parts of Allach were liber-

C Co GIs at Allach



ated that morning by 42nd Division troops.) When the prisoners realized we were the U.S. Army, the celebration began. We promptly gave them all of our K-rations, candy, and cigarettes. One GI threw a cigar over the fence and when the fight ended, the cigar was in shreds. We retrieved potatoes from a nearby cellar and threw them over the fence to the prisoners. I spoke with an older prisoner from Warsaw who told me he was a doctor. He said the guards had treated him deferentially and he was not worked as hard.

(Pvt Arthur W. Toratti #37599967 of our 1st platoon told me that he is the second GI from the left in the Allach

Tossing Lt. Zankel!



photo and I'm sure the third GI with the carbine is Pvt George J. Babel #36691031, our platoon runner. Look closely at the other photo and you'll see the happy prisoners celebrate by tossing Lt. Leonard G. Zankel Jr. #0-2011728 in the air! The newly commissioned Lt. Zankel had long served in Companies A and B before joining C Co as a platoon leader on April 8.)

Both Allach prison-

ers and conscripted laborers had worked in the nearby BMW plant, which had assembled Stuka engines for the Luftwaffe. In recent years, I met Peter Van Schaik, who was from

Rotterdam, and learned that during the war he was a conscripted worker at this BMW plant. Peter told me that one day a prisoner asked him for food and, at great risk to himself and the prisoner, he left bread where he knew the prisoner would find it.

A great human interest story began at Allach with the liberation of Andor Deszöfe, a Jewish prisoner from Budapest, Hungary. He was befriended by S/Sgt William F. Sutton #14193108, a squad leader in our 3rd Platoon, and Bill talked for an hour that day with Andor, who spoke English well. A few days later, Andor walked away from Allach and showed up at C Co in Munich wanting to join the American Army and fight the Germans! Bill put a uniform on "Andy" who "served" four months in C Co until the day the regiment boarded the ship at Le Havre for the trip home. Bill considered smuggling him aboard but thought better of it.

Andor eventually emigrated to New York City where, aided by Paul Rodda (who had served as a Private #45189861 in Bill's squad), he found and reconciled with his father (who had abandoned the family in Hungary). Andor married, raised a family, and had a successful business in New York City, and he reunited with Bill on many occasions there and in Georgia. Paul Rodda attended Andor's wedding and remembered this from the reception: "I talked to a fellow who turned out to be an ex-SS trooper who had befriended Andy at Allach. Andy had kept in touch and had sent him airline tickets to come to the wedding. Go figure!"

(Postscript: In 2009 I came across an Oregon woman on the internet who was searching for her Jewish roots. She was looking for her father's cousin and the International Red Cross had tracked him from Hungary to Dachau, where he was known to have been liberated, but then the trail grew cold. The cousin's name? Andor Deszöfe! By that time, Andor had died but I put her in touch with Bill Sutton so she could contact the family.)

That afternoon at Allach, C Co was relieved by K Co and we resumed the advance on Munich, which we approached with great apprehension. It was assumed Munich would be another Nuremberg so we were delighted to learn the early units of the 45th and 42nd Divisions had met only scattered resistance that morning. Later, I wrote to my folks, "We walked 18 kilometers from outside of Dachau to the middle of town and I never took the gun off my shoulder." At one point in Munich we were walking on a boulevard that had a wide median strip that was strewn with German military paraphernalia. It seems that

S/Sgt Bill Sutton



Andor "Andy"
Deszöfe

Deszöfe and Paul Rodda with Joan
(of Arc) at Reims Cathedral



when the Wehrmach and SS troops learned they would not have to defend the city, they changed into civvies and threw their uniforms and gear into the streets.

I remember 30Apr45 as an exciting but easy day, and to my surprise I found in the morning report that Pfc John W. Idol Jr. #34868182 was wounded. That would have been somewhere between Dachau and Munich (unless there'd been a delay in reporting). Like many of us, he had joined C Co in the last week of January 1945 when it was reformed (after being captured in Alsace in France) and he had gone unscathed through the Siegfried Line, Aschaffenburg, and Nuremberg. On what was effectively our final day in combat, Idol was C Co's last casualty of World War II.

The next day, May 1, it was announced that the 45th Division would occupy Munich and our celebration began. On May 2, I wrote to my parents: "A guy just came in and said Generals Patch (7th Army) and Patton (3rd Army) are about six blocks from here and are throwing the wildest party." On 08May45, World War II in Europe officially ended. We occupied Munich for six weeks and then, after moves to the Augsburg area and Camp St. Louis near Reims, France, we sailed from Le Havre in early September for the USA.



Additional reading on the liberation of Dachau

All can be found in the 45th Museum Library

Monograph #14 *Dachau and Its Liberation* by Felix L. Sparks is available from the 45th Division Association. Sparks commanded the 3rd Bn of the 157th IR at Dachau.

The Rock of Anzio – From Sicily to Dachau: A History of the U.S. 45th Infantry Division by Flint Whitlock, 1998, Westview Press. Chapter 13 describes the liberation of Dachau. (Used copies on Amazon.)

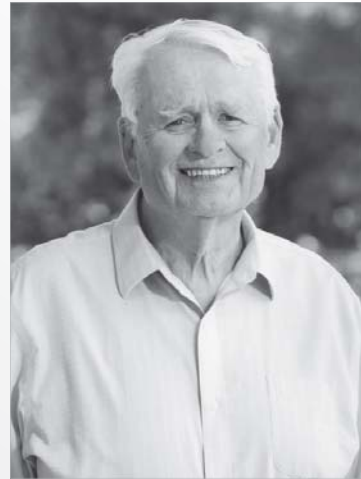
Dachau 29 April 1945: The Rainbow Liberation Memoirs. Edited by Sam Dann, 1998, Texas Tech University Press. Accounts of the Dachau liberation by veterans of the 42nd Division.

Convoy De La Mort Buchenwald-Dachau (paperback in French) by Francois Bertrand. The author was a prisoner on the Buchenwald-Dachau Death Train and his first-hand account is a primary source of information about the train. Published in 2000 by Heracles.

The Liberator by Alex Kershaw, 2012, Crown. This is the story of Felix L. Sparks' incredible career as an officer in the 45th Division from Sicily to Munich. The liberation of Dachau is covered in great detail with many photos. (New and used copies on Amazon.)

Between 1996 and 2003, Dan Dougherty published twenty-three issues of *Second Platoon* for veterans of C Co. Many issues contain articles and photos by soldiers, prisoners, and historians on the liberation of Dachau and Allach.

Dan Dougherty graduated from Central High School in Austin, Minnesota, in June 1943 and was immediately activated from the army reserve. After four months of infantry basic training at Ft. McClellan and five months in the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) at St. Louis University, he was assigned to the 44th Infantry Division when the ASTP folded in March 1944. The 44th completed pre-combat training at Camp Phillips near Salina, Kansas, and sailed for Cherbourg from the Boston POE on 05Sep44. The Division started fighting in the 7th Army sector near Luneville, France, on 18Oct44 with Pfc Dougherty serving as BAR gunner in the 2nd Platoon, K Co, 324th Regiment.



When six companies of the 157th Regiment of the 45th Division were captured in Alsace (Operation Nordwind) in January 1945, 180 sergeants from other 7th Army divisions were immediately transferred to the 157th to help reform those units, and Dan and Leonard Parker were two of the twelve sergeants from the 44th Division who joined C Co at that time. Between the two divisions, they served together in the same rifle companies for twenty months and enjoyed good

reunions after the war. On 18Mar45, Dan was one of C Co's thirty-five casualties in the Siegfried Line, and he returned to the unit from the hospital on April 2nd and so missed the Rhine crossing and much of the Aschaffenburg battle.

Dan was discharged from the Army on 10Nov45. After the war, he attended Carleton College (BA) and Case Western Reserve University (MSSA) and had a career in insurance sales. He and his wife Norma have been married sixty-six years and reside in Fairfield, California. They have three children and seven grandchildren.



S/Sgt Dan Dougherty 11Apr45



The Bay Area Jewish community honored more than 100 camp liberators at a Holocaust Remembrance Day service on April 30, 1995. Chairman of the event was William J. Lowenberg who was liberated at Allach on April 30, 1945!

HOLOCAUST
Remembrance Day
50th Anniversary of Liberation

On this the 30th Day of April, 1995, at Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco, in commemoration of Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 50th Anniversary of Liberation of the Nazi Concentration Camps,

The Jewish community of the San Francisco Bay Area honors

Dan P. Dougherty

*as a member of the 45th Infantry Division
which helped liberate KZ Dachau*

As a member of a liberating unit you brought freedom to those who suffered so cruelly; you helped restore life to those who were near death; you ensured that there would be eyewitnesses to the horrors which occurred; you hastened the defeat of Nazism; and you have provided living testimony about the lessons of the Holocaust.

With eternal gratitude for your courage and caring which enabled a remnant of our people to survive against all odds.

*William J. Lowenberg
William J. Lowenberg, Chairman
Committee of Remembrance
Jewish Community Relations Council*

*Louis de Groot
Louis de Groot
President
Holocaust Center of Northern California*



Of the 31,432 prisoners liberated alive
at Dachau, 3,918 were French.